DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 805 HE 034 165

AUTHOR Shaughnessy, Michael F.
TITLE Delivery of the Knowledge Curriculum vs. Skill and Competency Curriculum.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; *Competence; *Curriculum; Higher Education; *Knowledge Level; Lecture Method; Multiple Choice Tests; *Performance Based Assessment; *Socialization; Technological Advancement

ABSTRACT

Students are socialized into a subculture of education through many means, but many students encounter only the lecture method, especially in the general education curriculum. The lecture approach is commonly associated with multiple choice testing, and some students may go through college without taking, or learning to take, other kinds of tests. Many colleges adhere to the lecture/take notes/take tests model. For some students, there are competency based classes that adhere to skill based models. Rather than earning a grade through multiple choice tests, the student is forced to perform. This is especially evident for education students who must student teach. Evaluations are based on the subjective evaluation of the instructor. Some students are not able to make the transition to the performance based approach. However, in the future, teachers will increasingly be faced with the demand to provide instruction and knowledge to students in an increasingly computerized, sophisticated, electronic fashion. Students must be socialized anew to accept feedback and evaluations that are of more than multiple choice nature. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 454 805

Delivery of the Knowledge Curriculum vs. Skill and Competency Curriculum

Michael F. Shaughnessy
Eastern New Mexico University
Portales, New Mexico 88130

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Shaughnessy

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

HE034165

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

Education is becoming increasingly complex and intricate, with sub specializations being more frequently seen. Students are socialized into a subculture of education via a variety of means. Some students attend freshmen level seminars and orientations. Others attend two year or community colleges and then transfer to four year institutions.

In the general education curriculum, students attend lectures, perhaps take part in group discussions and in general, take multiple choice tests. They may or may not be graded on a curve, or they may be able to procure 3 credit hours by attending classes and handing in a number of assignments.

The lecture format is the generally accepted method of delivering knowledge to students, particularly in the general education curriculum. This lecture format may take various different delivery models. A professor may utilize overhead transparencies, put an outline on the board, or use hand outs when appropriate for emphasis. In general, the locus of responsibility is on the professor to "deliver" the knowledge. He or she may be aided by a textbook, or perhaps in some instances by a graduate assistant who "fills in" when he or she has committee duties or responsibilities. In specific instances, a computer may provide additional assistance in certain courses.

The locus of responsibility on the student is for him/her to show up for class, take notes, read the book outside of class, and prepare for tests. In many instances, the student does all of the above, some of the above, or none of the above.

The student who does all of the above is rewarded by a higher grade, all things being equal. This student may be on scholarship and may be able to do "all of the above".

In other instances, the student does some of the above. He or she may work full or part time, so they may not read the book all of the time, may miss a class or two or may only cursorily prepare for tests.

In still other scenarios, students may do none of the above and still procure that saving "C" grade, which allows them to continue on to repeat this process or procedure. The student may in actuality have earned a D+ or a C-, but the student is allowed to continue on to accumulate credits toward his or her degree. During this journey, they may seriously think about a major or minor, or may simply take courses which they find of interest, or the courses that fit into their schedule.

3

Many general education courses are geared toward the "introductory model" that is, the student is "exposed" to music appreciation, art appreciation or sex appreciation (with or without the lab) . Since these courses are expository, little accountability is mandated or required.

If tests are missed, there are opportunities to make them up or some instructors "drop the lowest grade" to compensate. In some areas, at the junior level, there is either a major shift, or in some academic areas, a minor transition.

If the person has been exposed to history and western civilization, they decide to major in history and continue to take history courses and adhere to the formula of "showing up for class, taking notes, writing term papers and doing multiple choice tests". In some universities, this formula is pervasive in all disciplines. (One graduate student indicated to me that she had never taken anything other than a multiple choice test in all of her four years of college). This formula works very well and there apparently is some implicit contract between the students and the faculty that this is the way the majority of students want their knowledge "delivered". The professor gets to lecture, the student takes notes, and the multiple choice test students are satiated. They can continue to work outside, possibly cram the night before the test, and at worst, write a term paper. (After enough term papers, most students have the process and procedure down adequately).

Many majors have this "knowledge delivery" system- math, philosophy, English, many science areas, many colleges of business and many liberal arts colleges adhere rigidly to the lecture/take notes/take tests model. It does meet the needs of many students who appropriate a certain amount of time to their schooling and who may work outside the home and have child care concerns.

Sadly, for some students, in other disciplines, there are competency based classes which adhere to skill based models. In education, for instance, one has to do "student teaching", perform "classroom observations", write up lesson plans and actually devote an entire semester of their lives to a situation in which they are supervised by a supervising teacher and do nothing other than work in their chosen field.

In various elementary and secondary training programs, there are no longer multiple choice tests to take (which are highly objective) but rather there are lesson plans to write, objectives to determine, and a host of other professional activities which often consume much time

outside of the classroom. In these programs, one does not prepare for a multiple choice test, one prepares to teach children, many of which are unmotivated, lethargic, listless and apathetic. In many instances, students revolt against this method of delivery of instruction. They have been "socialized" into the lecture/take notes/take multiple choice test format. In these programs, college and university students must deal with real live children in a classroom, rather than a multiple choice IBM test. The shock to their nervous system is often tremendous.

Evaluations are no longer based on nice objective multiple choice tests, but rather on the subjective evaluation of the supervising student teacher or the faculty member observing the student teach, or prepare lesson plans.

The student who happily went through their general education curriculum required courses taking highly objective, multiple choice tests now has to submit to a situation in which subjective impressions regarding quality are the order of the day. If said students have never handed in a term paper, they are totally oblivious to the matter of quality as their grades have in the past simply been based on multiple choice objective tests.

In psychology and many of the science areas, students are required to perform lab experiments and write up the results of said empirical endeavors. The student who was once very very happy taking multiple choice tests now has to allocate a greater amount of time to these efforts. Said student is now very unhappy because he or she is dislodged from their comfort zone of take notes/take tests and now must work on procedural competencies and skills.

Said student must procure additional time for these labs and activities and may reflect on their career choice mistake. Sadly, some students are too deeply entrenched in their major. They have already taken 20 or 25 hours of multiple choice test courses, so they are entrapped into a number of upper division hours which are radically different in terms of their knowledge delivery lower division courses.

Some students never make the transition. Other students complain bitterly about the additional time, and grading procedures. This explains why many faculty do not want to teach the skill/competency courses and prefer the knowledge delivery system.

In our increasingly technological society, with computerized testing, test banks and interactive computer disks, students may be more comfortable with the multiple choice test format and increasingly uncomfortable with the subjective observations that instructors have to make. Such students will balk at having to learn competencies and demonstrate skills. They may continue to want multiple choice tests to demonstrate "classroom management".

Classroom management can really only be assessed by watching a person in a real live classroom, with real live students, managing problems and dealing with problematic difficult students. One can only assess counseling skills by observing psychology students counseling individuals with emotional problems.

A matching column or a true false test or a "multiple guess" test as they are often called, cannot validly, reliably, accurately assess these skills, abilities and competencies.

As we approach the year 2000, we will be faced with an increasing demand to provide instruction and knowledge to students in an increasingly computerized, sophisticated, electronic fashion. Yet, in the human service areas, education, psychology, social work and nursing, where observations and supervision remains crucial, we will have an increasingly unhappy number of students who have been happily indoctrinated into a knowledge delivery system of take note/take tests mode or model. It is becoming increasingly difficult, for whatever reason, for many students to "shift" from one mode to another.

Many students have been "spoon fed" in their general education courses, and continue to want their education delivered in this manner.

Since students are socialized into an academic environment, (much as faculty are acculturated into an university setting), much work will be needed to re-socialize students to the point of accepting feedback, accepting supervision and accepting evaluations that are not of a multiple choice test nature. Said evaluations will be quality based, and reflect the professional judgment of the instructor.

Said evaluations will be criticized since they are not solely objective. Checklists and behavioral observations will be required as will more and more out of class work.

Many students will enter college, be happily inducted and co opted into a lecture form of knowledge delivery curriculum, and will remain in those academic areas. Others will enter college, be general educated into the early knowledge delivery system, and then suffer a transitional shock as they move into their major and minor fields of study which may require more out of class commitments. We may need to provide much support for these students.

Lastly, some others will change majors and minors as they search for a delivery system that best meets their specific needs and wants. It is unclear as to whether we will be able to meet the needs of ALL students and deliver knowledge, skills and competencies to them . Specifically, the non traditional student, the part time student and the student with children will need more intensive academic advising and assistance with their choice of major, minor and career. They may also need some assistance with the transition from a knowledge based system to a skills/competency based system. Providing help to students that need assistance will be required in the future.